

Easterling, Deborah

2019-281-S - 291069

Parties/SA

From: Easterling, Deborah
Sent: Friday, March 20, 2020 11:47 AM
To: Grant Robitzsch
Subject: RE: [External] Palmetto Utilities rate increase

2020-106-A
291070

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POSTED
3-20-2020

Dear Mr. Robitzsch,

This is to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence the Public Service Commission regarding a delay of actions until after the focus is not on COVID-19, a request to schedule two public night hearings, and comments regarding the proposed rate increase Your correspondence will be posted on Commission's Website at www.psc.sc.gov, under Docket No. 2019-281-S - Application of Palmetto Utilities, Incorporated for Adjustment (Increase) of Rates and Charges, Terms and Conditions, for Sewer Service Provided to Customers in Its Richland and Kershaw County Service Areas.

You can follow this Docket and other daily filings made at the Commission by subscribing to the Commission's Email Subscriptions at this link: <https://dms.psc.sc.gov/Web/Email>; or you can follow the individual Docket at the link listed below:

Docket No. 2019-281-S - Application of Palmetto Utilities, Incorporated for Adjustment (Increase) of Rates and Charges, Terms and Conditions, for Sewer Service Provided to Customers in Its Richland and Kershaw County Service Areas <https://dms.psc.sc.gov/Web/Dockets/Detail/117238>

Please do not reply directly to this email. Any correspondence regarding this matter should be sent to the parties of record and to contact@psc.sc.gov.

Sincerely,

Deborah Easterling
Executive Assistant
803-896-5133

RECEIVED

MAR 20 2020

PSC SC
MAIL / DMS

From: Grant Robitzsch <grant.robitzsch@psc.sc.gov>
Sent: Thursday, March 19, 2020 2:11 AM
To: PSC_Contact <Contact@psc.sc.gov>; Boyd, Jocelyn <Jocelyn.Boyd@psc.sc.gov>; Dukes, Jerisha <Jerisha.Duke@psc.sc.gov>
Cc: IvoryThigpen@schouse.gov; mia@scsenate.gov; Grube-Lybarker, Carri <clybarker@scconsumer.gov>; Pittman, Jenny <jpittman@ors.sc.gov>; Nelson, Jeff <jnelson@ors.sc.gov>
Subject: [External] Palmetto Utilities rate increase

Public Service Commission,

I strongly disagree with another rate increase for Palmetto Utilities. In March 2018, our Palmetto Utilities wastewater bill was \$36.50 and our City of Columbia water bill was \$30.19. In May 2018, our Palmetto Utilities bill increased nearly 43% to \$52.10 and our City of Columbia bill was \$47.07. The amount of the City of Columbia water bill fluctuates based on our usage, e.g. summer months watering the lawn and garden, or visits from family. The highest City of Columbia water bill we had was \$105.17 in September 2019. The average City of Columbia water bill over the last two years is \$51.19. So, on average we are paying more for outgoing wastewater than for clean, incoming water from the City of Columbia. We are paying more for a smaller volume ending up as wastewater than for a larger volume of potable water. Yet, Palmetto Utilities is seeking another increase. This time a nearly 28% increase to \$66.62. Absurd! The rate

increase is for improved infrastructure and large capital projects based on population growth, then the investment should be recouped when the population growth is realized. This planning on Palmetto Utilities part does not warrant a financial hardship for its customers. Additionally, a flat rate is unfair to households with less people. A one person retiree household on a fixed income will pay the same rate as a two income family of four. Wastewater rates should be based on water consumed or for a more accurate measure, water exiting the residence.

On or about February 11, public hearings were scheduled for March 12 and 19 at Spring Valley High School. Please reference the "Notice of Public Night Hearing" ID number 290308 under docket number 2019-281-S.

<https://dms.psc.sc.gov/Attachments/Matter/7715f5c1-b7c7-4a08-9f6b-44e439691907>

On March 11, a notice to postpone the March 12 hearing to March 19 was filed. Reference ID number 290880 under the above docket number. <https://dms.psc.sc.gov/Attachments/Matter/94b6e9fc-7bbb-4a9a-8744-112550257aec>

Not only was the March 12 hearing postponed to a date originally scheduled for the second hearing, but it will be a virtual hearing. Basically, the two in-person hearings are becoming one virtual, call-in session. I am not discounting the crisis we are going through with Covid-19; however, to not allow the public due diligence of presenting themselves before the Commission is an insult. I understand the Commission is seeking Governor McMaster's and the General Assembly's approval to temporarily stay various codes and required statutory deadlines for the Commission's action. I truly hope the Commission's requests are simply not delaying the inevitable rate increase, but is an action to allow the public to voice concerns during a less troublesome time after Covid-19 has passed and we have returned to our new normal.

In closing, I ask you to delay further actions until our focus is not on Covid-19, schedule two in-person hearings, deny the 28% increase approving no more than the standard inflation rate, and change from a fixed rate to one based on consumption.

Sincerely,

Grant Robitzsch

Columbia, SC 29229